



Fact Sheet:



Driving Under the Influence / DUI: The Most Frequently Asked Questions

How serious is the problem?

Drunk driving is the most frequently committed crime in the United States. It is estimated that alcohol and other drugs are a factor in 45.1 percent of all fatal automobile accidents and one-fifths of all accidents involving injury. In 1996, 17,126 people were killed in alcohol-related crashes and it is projected that 1 out of 280 babies born today will die due to driving under the influence. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration further estimates that there is an average of one alcohol-related fatality every 31 minutes.

Alcohol-related injuries continues to be a serious threat to both drivers and passengers on the road. During 1996, about 321,000 persons suffered injuries in alcohol-related crashes. This is an average of one person every 2 minutes.

Beyond the tragedy of lost lives and painful recovery from injuries, alcohol-related accidents exact a huge economic cost. The financial costs associated with alcohol-related crashes in the United States have been estimated at \$47 billion annually in lost wages, medical expenses, property damage, legal fees, and insurance costs. About 3 in every 10 Americans will be involved in an alcohol-related crash at some time in their lives. Traffic crashes are the greatest single cause of death for every age between the ages of 6 and 27. Almost half of these fatalities are a result of alcohol.

How does the DUI problem impact young people?

Drinking and driving continues to be the number one killer of young people. On a per population basis, drivers under the age of 25 had the highest rate of involvement in fatal crashes among all age groups. Intoxication rates for 16-20 year old drivers in fatal crashes in 1996 were 14.1 percent. The highest intoxication rates were for drivers 25-34 (26.2 percent) and 21-24 (27 percent).

Trends

Statistics show that alcohol-related crashes and deaths have been slowly decreasing since 1987. In 1996, there were 17,126 alcohol-related fatalities, which is a 29 percent reduction from the 24,045 alcohol-related fatalities reported in 1986.

What are the penalties for DUI?

Fines/Penalties

..... approximately \$300 to \$5000

Jail/Community Service

.....2 days to 2 years

Alcohol/Drug Treatment Program

.....3, 18, or 30 month programs

Drivers License Suspension

..... 4 months to 5 years

How much does a DUI cost?

Costs for DUI have been estimated to be more than \$4,500. (Actual costs may vary.)

This amount does not include attorney fees or lost wages due to court appearances.) Here is a conservative itemized breakdown for a first DUI offense:

Fines/Penalties.....	\$1,500
Tow/Impound Fee.....	150
Bail	150
Alcohol Treatment	400
Insurance Increase.....	1,600
Restitution Fund.....	500
DMV Reissue Fee.....	100
Jail Time.....	100
Total	\$4,500

How much alcohol does it take to impair driving?

This depends on several factors:

- Your weight. It takes less alcohol to become intoxicated if you weigh 120 pounds than if you weigh 180 pounds.
- Whether you are drinking on a full or empty stomach. It takes less time to get intoxicated if you drink on an empty stomach.
- How many drinks you have and their alcohol content.
- How long you have been drinking.
- Whether you are taking any medicines or drugs, which may combine with alcohol to increase the effect of alcohol on your driving ability.

What is blood alcohol concentration (BAC)?

Blood Alcohol Concentration is a measure of the amount of alcohol in the blood stream expressed as a percentage. The illegal BAC level in California is set at .08 percent. A person weighing 150 pounds, drinking at the

rate of 1.5 ounces of alcohol (the approximate amount found in one 12-ounce can of beer or one glass of wine) per half hour, would need:

Two drinksto reach a BAC of .05%
 Three drinks..to reach a BAC of nearly .08%
 Four drinks.....to reach a BAC of .10%
 Six drinks.....to reach a BAC of .15%

Is it safe to drive after drinking modest amounts of alcohol?

Just a drink or two can make someone behind the wheel a threat to themselves and to others. Drinking alcohol affects a driver's coordination, reaction time, and vision (particularly at night.) Long before any outward signs of impairment are recognized, the driver's judgment, emotions, and confidence are adversely effected. Even at BACs as low as .02 percent, alcohol affects driving ability and crash likelihood. The probability of crash begins to increase significantly at .05 percent BAC and climbs rapidly after about .08 percent BAC.

What is "Admin per se?"

"Admin per se" refers to a relatively new procedure---administrative license suspensions---in which a driver's license may be taken before conviction when a driver fails or refuses to take a chemical test for alcohol. As of October 1998, 41 states including Washington, D.C. had administrative license suspension laws. In California a driver's license is suspended for four months on a first offense, and one year for a second offense.

When do most DUIs occur?

Most DUIs occur at night (9 p.m. to 6 a.m.). Sixty-nine percent of the drivers of nighttime single vehicle fatal crashes had

BAC levels of .10 percent or more. Only 21 percent had no alcohol in their blood.